# Around the World in 3.5 Days

## Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival serves up a universal view of gay, lesbian and transgender life through the eye of the camera

**By Noel Black and Kathryn Eastburn**

Bigger, longer and decidedly international is what you can look forward to at the third annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival (PPLFF) at the Fine Arts Center, coming up Thursday through Sunday, Sept. 5 to 8., Colorado's only gay, lesbian and transgender film festival. (Denver's is now defunct, and Boulder's is not happening this year).

"The quality of the films, overall, is better this year," said Alma Cremonesi, the festival's founder and president. "And this year the films are coming from places you would never imagine: Slovenia and China — we have the first lesbian film to come out of China — and Senegal. We're reaching to more isolated parts of the globe."

Aside from the obvious international flavor of this year's PPLFF, one of the more refreshing elements in many of the films is the abundance of "post-gay" stories. The term refers to the style of taking the existence, and in many cases acceptance, of gay culture entirely for granted and, in some cases, going so far as to ignore the existence of the straight world altogether.

Other changes festival-goers can look forward to this year are rush tickets (tickets reserved for people who wait in line just before the show), a panel that will include four filmmakers who will participate in a Promising Young Filmmakers Forum on Sunday afternoon, after-parties every night and a more professional projectionist than in years past.

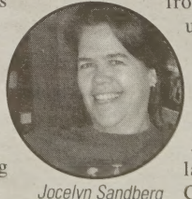
"Last year we had a projectionist who thought God was going to strike him down for playing the films, so he would put the film in and close his eyes and pray," said Cremonesi. "All kinds of things went wrong."

As in previous years, this year's films were chosen from the pool of films played at the San Francsico International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and at the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival where Cremonesi and other members of the festival committee travel each year to see the latest releases. This is something that makes the PPLFF unique in festival circles.

"There are no calls for entry with our festival. We just don't have the personnel to deal with hundreds of videos coming in from all over. We let San Francisco and London narrow it down for us, so we make our selections from their selections," said Cremonesi.

Despite the relative success of past years' festivals (including last year's, which took place right after the events of 9/11), Cremonesi hopes that the community will really support this year's PPLFF so that it can continue to be a vital part of the Colorado Springs culture.

"The economy is definitely affecting us. Our costs are way up from last year because we have to provide all the video equipment and rent projectors," she said. "Rental fees for the films also went up. Printing costs went up. And we committed to having special guests from California. Everything went up!"



Jocelyn Sandberg

This year the festival is dedicated to the memory of KRCC operations manager and PPLFF committee member Jocelyn Sandberg, whose murder last May on the edge of the Colorado College campus remains unsolved.

"I have deep admiration for everyone involved in honoring Jocelyn Sandberg's spirit," said Cremonesi. "She loved our film festival and I had hoped that she would be here to take my place."

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## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**All Shows:** Fine Arts Center Theater, 30 W. Dale St.

**Festival Passes:**
$75, $60 for seniors, students and low income. Pass gives admission to all festival events including 15 short films, 13 features, the Young Filmmakers Forum and all parties. On sale now at KRCC, 912 W. Weber St.; Wag 'N Wash, Uintah Gardens, 16th and W. Uintah; or Spike of Life, 727 Manitou Ave. in Manitou Springs.

**All-day Passes:**
Sept. 6 - $20 • Sept. 7 - $25 • Sept. 8 - $25

On sale now at the Fine Arts Center box office

**Tickets for Individual Shows and Rush Tickets:**
Tickets for individual shows can be purchased in advance for $8, or a limited number of rush tickets will be available just before the shows on a first-come, first-serve basis at the theater. On sale now at the Fine Arts Center Box Office.

### OPENING NIGHT Thurs., Sept. 5

6:30 Reception and Welcomes
8:00 Shorts: *Sexy and Going West* (Canada)
8:40 Feature: *Friends and Family* (U.S. Premiere)

### Fri., Sept. 6

3:30 Short: *Roberta Loved* (United States)
4:00 Feature: *The Journey to Kafiristan* (Germany)
6:00 Short: *The Parlor* (United States)
6:15 Feature: *Hush!* (Japan)
9:00 Short: *Breaking Up Really Sucks* (United States)
9:15 Feature: *A Family Affair* (United States)

### Sat., Sept. 7

11:00 Short: *Sweet Thing* (Australia)

silent Sam (Michael Moerman), and where she begins the conscious search for "Ms. Rightowitz." Following a string of dates with a trio of crypto-California types named Debi, Suzi and Teri ("I just wanted to meet someone without an "e" sound at the end of her name!"), Rachel meets Christine (Erica Shaffer), a WASP massage therapist who quickly becomes her committed lover. A year later, Rachel and Christine are about to be married when Reggie re-enters the picture, providing the requisite plot complication and sexual sizzle.

*A Family Affair* succeeds best where it relies on Lesnick's sharp-tongued wit, viewing Jewish family life and gay romance through the same dry-witted lens. A psychic probe of Rachel's unwillingness to commit draws the film off course a bit, but the creator's purpose is pure and gives Moerman a moment of screen time that is touching and offers a rare look at a functional gay daughter/father relationship.

Shaffer's Erica is a 21st-century gay June Cleaver and the actress doesn't make a single wrong turn. Lesnick is consistently delightful, serving one-liners like line drives — straight, hard hitting, close to the ground and well inside the ballpark. (KCE)

## Saturday, Sept. 7

### **Markova: Comfort Gay

Philippines: Tagalog with English subtitles

Simply put: Do not miss this powerful film based on a true story. Director Gil M. Portes tells the story of Walter Dempster Jr., alias Markova, from the point of view of an elderly drag queen, looking back toward the


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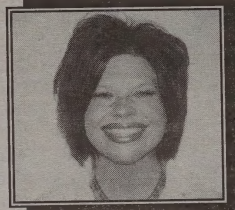

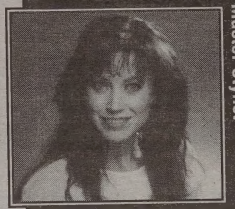

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Baby dreams
Ask
month

Alan's affair with Tommy. Alan settles with Peter until 1984 when Tommy, now living in Mexico, becomes sick and calls on Alan to rejoin him.

The road trip and run from the law that follow add adrenaline at this story of redemption set in the context of a critical period in gay history from civil rights to the spread of AIDS.

*The Trip* has a decided B-movie quality, but its scope makes up for its shortcomings in production. (NB)

## Sunday, Sept. 8

### ****Trembling Before G-d**

USA/France/Israel

*Documentary explores gay orthodox Jews*

One of the most compelling films in this year's festival, *Trembling Before G-d* is a documentary that explores the lives of gay Orthodox Jews.

Anyone who thought that fundamentalist Christians were the only literalist interpreters of biblical laws on homosexuality will want to see the ways that traditional, conservative Judaism deals with the homosexual members of the community and the ways those members deal, in turn, with their faith.

The irreconcilable contradictions provide the tension that drives this superbly made film by director Sandi Simcha DuBowski. (NB)

### *A.K.A. (Lies Are Like Wishes)

United Kingdom

This is a captivating fictionalized treatment of the true story of director Duncan Roy's life as Britain's infamous "Lord of the Lies." Born to an illegitimate 16-year-old waitress and, at 17, kicked out of his home by his abusive stepfather, young Roy found employment with eccentric London socialite, Lady Rendlesham. When she fired him, he set out for Paris where he took on the fictional identity of Lord Anthony Rendlesham and lived the high life of an aristocrat. As Anthony, Roy was welcomed into the inner circles of wealth and aristocracy until he was outed and convicted of credit card fraud and eventually imprisoned for 18 months. *A.K.A.* is Roy's feature film debut and was awarded this year as Best Fiction Film by the Miami Gay and Lesbian Film Festival and won the Audience Award at Inside Out, the Toronto Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival.

Roy uses a split-screen technique that keeps three separate images at play constantly, offering a unique view into his characters' motivation and emphasizing the split quality of his main character's double life. Matthew Leitch is intense and fetching as young Dean Page who leaves his working-class family and becomes entwined in the life of Lady Gryffoyn, then steals her son's identity and moves to Paris. There he befriends a young, gay American gigolo, Benjamin (Peter Youngblood Hills), who becomes his only true friend, but whose social ambition eventually tears the two apart.

Roy is particularly effective at drawing out the gnawing loneliness of Dean, the imposter whose actions are motivated by inescapable self-loathing. And he is adept at revealing the seamy underside of the British high society set of the late '70s, early '80s, where cocaine use is rampant and sex for hire is the order of the day.

When he finally returns home to confront his father, played powerfully by Geoff Bell, young Dean has truly come of age, ready to honestly face himself and the consequences of his deception. *A.K.A.* is artful and provocative, quiet and absorbing, its power undeniable. (KCE)

### *Karmen Geï

French and Wolof with English subtitles

Banned in Senegal for its bisexual and political content, Director Joseph Gaï Ramaka's adaptation of Bizet's *Carmen* is one of the most sensually exhilarating films in the PPLFF lineup.

In the opening scene we are introduced to Karmen Geï, played by the sultry and magnetic Djeïnaba Diop Gaï, as she seduces her prison warden Angelique (Stéphanie Biddle) in an inexplicably bizarre dance scene in the prison courtyard.

After Karmen sleeps with the warden that night, she is released and returns to the city where she again reveals the anarchic freedom and sexuality of her character as she crashes the wedding party of policeman Lamine Diop (Magaye Niang) and declares, "I say you are evil. ... You have swallowed up the country," and dances his wife into the ground.

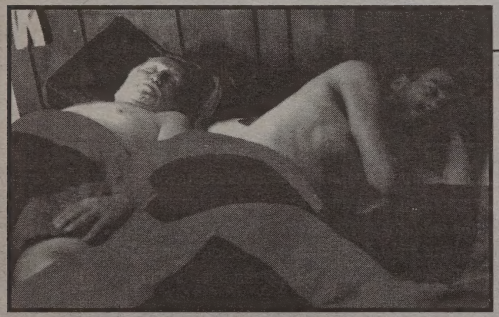
When Lamine tries to take Karmen to prison, she laughs in his face and escapes, leaving him to spend the night in jail where she later rescues him and makes him a part of her band of smugglers. And this is just the beginning.

*Bad-ass Senegalese Karmen*

Sound weird and confusing? It is! But this tale of individual freedoms vs. the imprisoning expectations of society set to Senegalese music, costumes and backdrop transforms the confusion into a truly bemusing musical mystery you'll be glad you can't fully grasp.

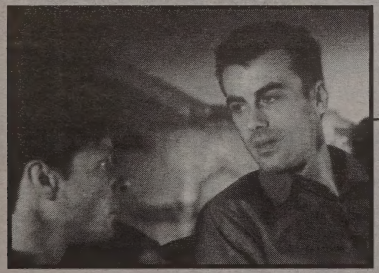
Note: *Karmen Geï* is said to be the first film musical ever to come out of Africa. (NB) ❐

# PIKES PEAK LAVENDER FILM FESTIVAL



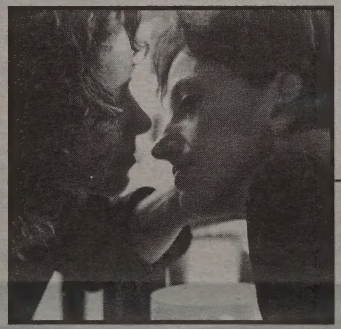
GUARDIAN OF THE FRONTIER (VARUH MEJE) → FIRST QUEER SLOVENIAN FILM

PPLFF

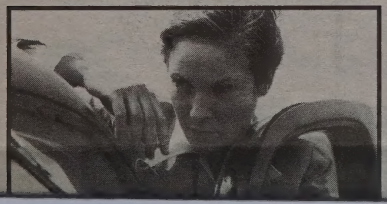


MARKOVA: COMFORT GAY → PHILIPPINES

DAYS (GIORNI) → ITALY



HUSH! → JAPAN



A FAMILY AFFAIR → USA

FISH AND ELEPHANT → FIRST CHINESE LESBIAN FILM

Travis Savala